Land becoming barren in Chhattisgarh

1284. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that due to pollution in Chhattisgarh, 50,000 acres of cultivable land in Simaga, Siitara and Mandir Hasaud has turned into barren land;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government are aware that recently Indira Gandhi Agriculture University conducted a survey on this issue, if so, the details of its recommendations and how Government are going to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) No such report has been received.

(c) According to information given by the Indira Gandhi Agriculture University no study has been conducted on this issue by them.

Agricultural Universities

1285. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Agricultural Universities functioning in the country, at present;

(b) whether Government periodically review their work to provide benefit to the poor rural agriculturists; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) There are 38 State Agricultural Universities in the country including Veterinary and Fisheries Universities at present.

(b) and (c) Agricultural Education is a State subject. The State Agricultural Universities are under the administrative control of the concerned State Government. Indian Council of Agricultural Research/ Department of Agricultural Research & Education provides financial

support to a limited extent to the State Agricultural Universities for coordinated research, strengthening and development of agricultural education.

Coverage area of Bt. Cotton

1286. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has now become a major player in the transgenic crops by achieving coverage area of 50,000 hectares;

(b) whether it is also a fact that India has hiked its Bt. Cotton coverage area by 400 per cent between 2002-04;

(c) if so, in what way India is planning to galvanise the global biotech crop market in the next three years; and

(d) whether a study has been made to find out the benefits of Bt. Cotton to Indian farmers, if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons, therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The Government, through the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in the Ministry of Environment & Forests had accorded approval only for one transgenic crop i.e. Bt. Cotton for commercial cultivation in India. The area under Bt. Cotton has increased from 0.70 lakh acres in Kharif-2002 to 2.30 lakh acres in Kharif-2003 and further increased to 12.00 lakh acres in Kharif-2004.

(c) The Department had set up a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan to formulate a long term policy on Application of Biotechnology in Agriculture. The Task Force had submitted its report which has been examined in the Department. On the basis of Inter-ministerial consultations on the recommendations of the Task Force the Department has decided ten priorities given in the statement. (*See* below).